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DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A, EUR/WE, EUR/RPM  
STATE PASS USAID FOR ASIA/SCAA

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM EAID AF AADP FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH SPECIAL ENVOY: FRANCE TO INCREASE ITS  
COMMITMENT TO AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: PRT and Sub-National Governance Counselor Valerie C. Fowler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) French Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Pierre Lellouche visited Kapisa province on March 24 where he participated in a shura of Afghan leaders and received briefings on the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and combined US-French military operations. Lellouche indicated that President Sarkozy will announce at the International Conference on Afghanistan at The Hague and the NATO Summit that France will increase its commitment to security and development in Afghanistan, with particular emphasis on agriculture programs in Kapisa Province and neighboring Sarobi District.

Increased French Commitment

¶2. (U) At a March 24 shura of Afghan leaders, Special Envoy Lellouche told Afghan officials and village elders that his visit marked the beginning of a new initiative by President Sarkozy to increase France's commitment to the security and development of Afghanistan. Governor Khwaja Khausuddin Abobaker, along with the 3/2011 Afghan National Army (ANA) Brigade Commander, Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) Senior Advisor, and a representative of the local elders, repeatedly thanked the coalition and the PRT for all that is currently being accomplished in their province. Governor Abobaker offered suggestions for French assistance, reciting from a list of 11 major development projects that ranged from a new power station to a dairy, taken from the Afghan National Development Strategy. Special Envoy Lellouche responded by stating that France could not afford the billions of dollars all of these projects require, but will work closely with the United States, United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the Afghan government to pursue these goals. (Lellouche stated to the press that French aid would increase from 10M euros to 40m euros in 2009, and grow to 100m euros in 2010.)

¶3. (C) Following the departure of the Afghans the Task Force, PRT representatives, and French officers briefed Lellouche and his delegation from the French Embassy, Foreign Ministry, and UNAMA. Lellouche asked detailed questions and said France is giving serious consideration to establishing a French PRT. Special Envoy Lellouche indicated that President Sarkozy will announce a significant increase in France's military and financial commitment during the International Conference on Afghanistan at The Hague and the NATO Summit.

¶4. (C) In a meeting March 27 with State PRT Director, French Embassy Counselor Cecile Sportis said that a French PRT remains a longer-term consideration. Sportis expects President Sarkozy's announcement to detail a French

commitment emphasizing agriculture programs in Kapisa Province and neighboring Sarobi District. These programs will nest in UNAMA's Integrated Approach. In the short-term, the French will focus on apiculture (bees and honey) as both a cash crop and source of sugar for families; on poultry farms; and on fertilizer and seeds, either for sale through local distributors or distributed on a for-work basis. Sportis noted that the French anticipate having pilot projects underway before May, when President Sarkozy may visit Afghanistan. In the longer-term, Sportis identified the establishment of eight veterinary clinics, a dairy factory, and training centers for farmers as proposed foci. Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) line directors in Kapisa and Sarobi welcomed the idea of training centers in both locations, which Sportis estimates could train 4,000 farmers each year. In response to a question, Sportis added that she anticipates President Sarkozy will also announce significant new French commitments to police mentoring.

Comment

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15. (C) Kapisa Province, along with Sarobi District in Kabul Province just to the south, will remain at the center of French presence in Afghanistan. The French will have their hands full, and there will be complex transfer issues should they decide to assume command of their own area of operational responsibility from the U.S. in the highly conflictive zone. Currently, French Task Force Tiger, consisting of a battalion of the elite Chasseurs Alpins, is the principal maneuver unit of US Task Force Warrior, a

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component brigade of CJTF-101 in RC-East. This partnership has been exceptional. However much resolve the French bring to their new level of commitment - for example, in sustaining forward operating bases or taking on the full scope of a PRT - their challenge will be to carefully match ambition with capabilities.

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